

Leading Causes of Death

- In descending rank order, the five leading causes of death in Tennessee in 1996 were heart disease, cancer, stroke, unintentional injury (“accidents and adverse effects”), and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). They accounted for approximately 16,174, 11,635, 4,064, 2,583 and 2,302 deaths, respectively. Heart disease and cancer combined to cause 54% of all deaths in 1996. Stroke, unintentional injury, COPD, and pneumonia and influenza collectively accounted for 21% of the deaths.
- In 1996, injury predominated as a cause of death in Tennessee from ages one year through 44. Unintentional injury was the leading cause of death from ages one through 34, and the second leading cause of death at ages 35-44. Intentional injury deaths comprise suicide and homicide. Suicide ranked second as a cause of death at ages 10-14 and third at ages 15-24. Homicide ranked second at ages 15-34 and third at ages 5-9.
- Suicide ranked as the second leading cause of death among Tennessee whites at ages 10-34 and ranked third among blacks at ages 15-24.
- Homicide was the leading cause of death among Tennessee blacks in 1996 at ages 15 through 34 years. It was the second leading killer of black children and youth ages 5-14 and third at ages 1-4.
- Cancer was the leading cause of death among Tennesseans ages 45-64 and ranked second to heart disease at ages 65 years and older. It ranked second at ages 5-9 and third at ages 1-4 and 10-14.
- HIV/AIDS did not rank among the top 10 killers overall in Tennessee in 1996. However, it ranked third as a cause of death at ages 25-34 years, fifth at ages 35-44, eighth at ages 15-24, and ninth at ages 45-54. HIV/AIDS was the second leading cause of death for blacks ages 25-34 and third at ages 35-44. It was the fourth ranked cause of death among whites ages 25-34 and fifth at ages 35-44.
- Stroke was the third leading overall cause of death among both whites and blacks in 1996. Among blacks, it ranked third at ages 45 and older as also among whites at ages 65 and older. Stroke was the fourth ranked cause of death among whites ages 45-64.
- COPD was the third leading killer of whites and the fifth leading killer of blacks at ages 55-64.